

# Sufism and the Contemporary Macedonian Society

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## *Abstract*

Macedonian society traditionally was area where Sufi movements were practicing their religious activities thus a specific cultural area that has influence in creating the Sufism as a dominant religion within Ottoman Empire. Minding that historical circumstances, also considering the area placed in the center of Balkan Peninsula having the qualities of multicultural characteristics that originating for centuries back in the history of the area, in September 2017 was conducted a survey with main goal detection and realizing the possible integrative traits and positive multicultural dimension of Sufism.

**Keywords:** Sufism, multiculturalism, Macedonian society, semi structural survey, cultural coexistence, social change.

## 1. Introduction

Having in mind most of the western scholars working on this subject nowadays, finding a rather concise and pretty much less worded definition would be a next socio-cultural challenge. Yet for this occasion it would be worthy mentioning that what is a common practice in almost every explanatory review of Sufism is that this religious aspect of Islam is rather internal, more mystical dimension of what we recon today as Islam religion (Beglerovic, 2004: Signs). Sufism is pragmatically connected with formative period of Islam religion and that is an historical fact (Karamustafa, 2007: 19). History speaks that every time when this religion will face with harsh times threatening its consistence, Sufism comes on the scene making things right again. Sufism is directed towards ethical proficiency of the followers also as a teaching is dedicated towards social and individual serenity: teaching people to fight their never ending desires by achieving internal equilibrium and also teaching people to be kind among each other as all of what is created on this world is a divine creation having a divine purpose. The most profound ideal for every Sufi is divine love, love of God, love of every creation since it's a divine creation. Every single script of a Sufi says about this ideal. There are no nations, no colors, considering humans; there are just men and women. By the way this love principle doesn't stops here but incorporates everything in and on this world as a divine creation having a divine place in a divine plane that humans not necessary understand. It is good to mention that what nowadays Wahhabism understands as a Jihad is a pan Muslim movement to fight against others, the nonbelievers.

What Sufis understand under Jihad is a bit different. It is a struggle within every man and woman, within themselves, with their worst enemy as would Muhammad said, whit their soul.

Struggle with soul's never-ending desires. This struggle within is the Jihad that Sufis are teaching about.

## 2. Macedonian social context

Inside territory of the Republic of Macedonia, in rather isolated ambient there are two prominent Tariqas: Bektashi Tarika in Debar area, and Alawi Tarika in Struga area. With a intention in detail acquaintance with these Tariqas on the territory of Republic of Macedonia was conducted a semi structural field survey that incorporated target group consisted by members of Islamic society inside Republic of Macedonia, members of Islamic intellectual society and members of Tariqas.

Having in mind the nature of the problem at this point which is in essence a socially isolated groups not so often present in everyday social life, as a methodological frame in gathering raw data was used semi structural in depth survey. The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys (Boyce, 2006: 4).

A common situation of group answer was notable to be praxis during most of the interviews so was taken measures in isolating the interviewed contestants. In essence, every single contestant was conducted under three groups of total twenty and one question which was all centered around Sufism and euro integration processes.

## 3. The interview

The general atmosphere during all the interviews was relaxed and the interviewees were given the time for comfort and ease while answering the questions. Some of the interviews were performed inside religious institutions where with a slight difficulty considering the curiosity of the crowd. Similarities occurred inside the educational institutions where interviews were conducted with academic society representatives. Namely, students have shown a particular interest considering the subject of the survey.

Nevertheless, the overall atmosphere was at highest level of professionalism and every one contestant gave the best of effort to contribute at the final result. Most of the records given were recorded by writing down on paper and only some were tape recorded when interviewee gave allowance.

The questions that were included in the interview, questions that were framing the conversation with the interviewees were in total twenty and one. In addition at the last page here as example are given the questions that compose the interview.

Within these twenty and one question is covered a thematic area that has three aspects. Question numbered with 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 involve the relation between Islamic society and Tariqas within Macedonian society. This thematic aspect has in expectation that interviewees will come up with a certain view on the situation of the Tariqas inside Macedonian society. Having in mind the structure of the interviewees, they are divided in three groups: representatives of Islamic society are on the one side, on the other side are representatives of Tariqas, and in the middle are representatives of academic society; what was expected here was to appear certain deviations in attitudes considering the answering questions but after summarizing the answers those expectations happened to be negligible.

Namely, interviews were conducted on each group of interviewees in the same order where the procedure started with the representatives of Islamic society with total ten in number, each interviewed independently. Next to be interviewed were members of Islamic intellectual

society, ten representatives in total, and last to be interviewed were representatives of Tariqas, eight representatives.

The first question that was asked and the question that has opened the interview were:

*What is the current situation of the Tariqas as a part of Islamic society in Macedonia?*

All ten representatives of Islamic society gave independently nearly the same in essence answer calming that Tariqas are well accepted as important and respected element of Islamic society and most of their praxis is included in everyday religious life.

Two interviewees, representatives from Islamic society had explained that on the territory of Republic of Macedonia certain religious activities are being performed by few Tariqas among whom are the Bektashi order which religious activities, some of them sought as slightly contrary with main teaching. Both of the interviewees were not so generous in giving the particular explanation on the subject. Another interviewee, representative from Islamic society gave the explanation how this group is practicing religious customs not autochthonous for Islam.

As one of the interviewee noted, “Islam is the religion of the truth, and the truth is that what is directed inside the holly book Quran, and this religious group, the part of Bektash order not supported by Islamic society is practicing a rather not prescribed and sometimes forbidden rituals by the Quran”.

This question is pretty much intricate having in mind the specific explanation of the last interviewee representing the Islamic society and as an additional question was part of further interviews for detecting the reason for such deviations.

Some of the interviewees representing the Islamic society pointed out how Sufism is for centuries present in this area and how Tariqas are part of the Islam in this region regardless on our consideration.

A common view shared among tenth interviewees representing the intellectual society is that Tariqas are integral part of the Islamic society. One interviewee pointed how Islamic society is showing tolerance for some Sufi rituals that are unusual for popular Islam and in that manner Islamic society is keeping a low profile.

Another interviewee from the intellectual society, in a rather exhausting and overwhelming explanation that in a way incorporates the independent answers from all the representatives of intellectual society, have pointed out this tolerant attitude practiced by Islamic society. Namely, Islamic society appreciates the Tariqas for they are one extraordinary, rather charming aspect of the Islam in these areas. He further gives explanation how centuries ago these areas were place where Tesawwuf was active and these areas have their specific touch in Tesawwuf. Today that is visible at the Muslims originating from this area especially during certain encounters with Muslims that are not from these cultural surroundings, but what is notable for these last decades is a presence of a certain change: a change that tries to influence the Islamic society.

Tariqa representatives, eight in total, while giving the explanation behind the tolerant attitude of the Islamic society noted that Islam is a very old religion which in its genesis has a certain changes but it is one of a few religions of the today world that managed to withstand its authenticity; namely, cause of its strict rules on which all Muslims are subjected. One of the interviewees pointed that it is a customary for all the Sufis to pay tribute on their shepherds, at the places where shepherds are buried. Today all that is being misunderstood: the picture of this old custom that is present among all Sufi orders is shown more like idolatry and thus it goes directly against solemn basics of Islam religion. Following that, the interviewee pointed out that this is where can be traced the main reason for marginalization tactics against Bektash order. On the sub question, “Was it the Islamic society that performs a marginalization actions against Bektashi

order”, the answer was that it is a delicate situation. On the same sub question, next representative of the Tariqa pointed out that in this, current situation with the Bektashi order, what is evident is a certain amount of introversion and closeness among themselves.

One of the interviewees of the Tariqas, a member of Bektashi order, didn't give any comment on the sub questions that was considering the Bektashi order, not as much as a facial expression, but only gave answer on the written question, and that is that position of the Islamic society in this manner is close to indifference, but just at this moment though.

*Are the Tariqas equally treated within Islamic society?*

With this question it was meant to monitor the treatment of Sufi groups, the equal treatment as a part of the Islamic society.

The overall attitude of the representatives of the Islamic society was positive, and all the ten interviewees answered that in all the religious institutions considering the Islamic society are welcome all Muslims.

A representative of Islamic society pointed out that the prayer or *namaz*, is directed toward accomplishing peace in general, and thus divine peace. At this point all ten representatives shared the opinion that Islamic society doesn't make any separation towards Muslim followers and it's accessible to anyone who needs to open for Allah, and Sufis aren't excluded.

Concerning the treatment given by Islamic society towards Tariqas, there are minor divergences when answers given by the representatives of the intellectual society being summarized and analyzed. All ten representatives have nearly the same answers; they share same thoughts about inclusivity and no selectivity at any level shown by Islamic society in communication and general relations with all Muslims including Sufis. But among interviewees there were insinuating answers that provoked rather intricate sub questions, and this causality action leaded the particular conversation to expose a shared attitude which set the middle ground on possible initiative insufficiency at the general policy promoted by Islamic society. In other words, the Islamic society should make efforts in more efficient consolidation on the whole member body in general.

All eight members of the Tariqas answered that Islamic society is opened for them, but one of the interviewee pointed out the same thing that previously was explained by the members of the intellectual society, namely Islamic society should work in better consolidating activities for Muslim followers in general.

*What is the current number of Tariqa followers within Macedonian society?*

The interviewees representing the Islamic society didn't come up with the certain number, yet only few interviewees agreed that current number is very low like 5% from Muslim member body or even less. Members from the Tariqas that were included in the interview stated that on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia there are many Tekkes were in function are particular Sufi orders. As the biggest region they mention the Polog region where is situated the Bektashi Tekke in Tetovo, and this Tekke has also influence in nearby regions such as Struga, Debar, Kichevo, Ohrid, Prilep. Khalwati Tekke has its activities in region of Ohrid and Struga.

One interviewee, representative of Islamic society will continue that in area of Skopje, more specific municipality of Shuto Orizari is located the Rifai Tekke and in the central area of Skopje are located the Sadiyas order.

When asked about the number of Muslim followers, the representatives of the Tariqas all have answered similarly as they in number are few, they all agreed like 5% of the Muslim followers.

A part of the interviewees representing the Islamic society and part of the interviewees representing the intellectual society have pointed out the introvert character of the Tariqas within Macedonian society, and on the Balkan Peninsula as a factor for not knowing the exact number of Sufi followers in the region. It was pointed out by one representative from the intellectual society that the period of transition has influenced the relationship among people in general, society in general get encountered by people stuck with sole survival drive, and when global social, political and economic situation got changed, societies were opened for foreign influence which in return have mixed up already mixed things.

*How Islamic society oversees Tariqas and Sufism?*

The answers on the question 4, given by the representatives of the Islamic society are nearly the same, pointing that Islamic society accepts the teaching of the Tariqas and that this teaching is a part from the Islam religion. One interviewee was clearly saying that Islamic mysticism is an inherent part of Islam and that it was and has always been present here in this area thus Islamic society don't deny its contribution in all what Islam is.

Considering the question above, most precise and at the same, most inclusive answer was given by the representatives of Islamic society. The answers from other interviewees were in complementary coherence.

Detection for possible selective position by Islamic society towards members of Tariqa was an element inside 5<sup>th</sup> question from the interview – the last question from this thematic unites that is centered on the relations between Islamic society and Tariqas.

Namely, all the interviewees have shown that Islamic society doesn't support any selectiveness in treatment towards any Muslims including here the Tariqas. The function of the Islamic society is to collect and incorporate all the Muslim followers under the same roof – as one of the interviewee will explain. He will add here that Sufis are also Muslim followers and they are accepted by the society. Considering this question we find certain correlations with the answers from the representatives of intellectual society, and the representatives from the Tariqa respectively. What was the same point in these answers, Islamic society doesn't support any selectiveness regarding its followers.

Second thematic unit of questions was meant to detect the level of affirmation of Sufism inside Macedonian society. By this thematic unit of questions we seek to encircle thus monitor the presence of Sufism inside Macedonian society, and also the awareness of the citizens in general with cultural dimensions of Sufism and its potential benefits. Part of the questions is directed toward projection of the potential benefit of the Sufi culture in further reinforcement of the balance between cultural and religious diversity. Other part of the questions is directed in investigating the cultural and religious integration within Macedonian society mostly, but anticipating the wider region.

*What are the relations between Tariqas and other religious groups inside Macedonian society?*

The question under number 6 listed above, representatives from Islamic society didn't give strict answers, and so what was in common was expression of positivity while describing this relationship. One of the interviewee pointed out that Tariqas are more introvert in their public religious activities, without giving the reason for this low profile activity. Other interviewee pointed out that he never heard anything else but compliments describing the relations between Tariqas and other religious groups in the wider area of Balkans.

Analyzing the relation with other religious groups most of the interviewees representing the intellectual society pointed out that Tariqas with decades now have position themselves in rather closed, introvert position so they in general are not exposed with global social

currents and for reason of this situation the interviewees mostly traced the previous political situation in the region. One of the interviewee representing the intellectual society explained how there was moments when this closeness did paid awhile like overcome important existential circumstances, moments usually referred as religious transition by scholars. Anticipating all that, what needs here would be a certain period of time for returning back the trust and confidence among all the social elements. “What we’re talking about could be a *period of re-knowing each other*” – is what interviewee said.

The representatives of the Tariqas that were interviewed expressed a common thought describing the basis of Tesawwuf which is a mutual, respectful coexistence among each man. Although this is basically the same answer given by all eight representatives of the Tariqas, one interviewee gave a rather interesting explanation: “It’s in the core of Tesawwuf the mutual understanding and compassion among people and this is why all the differences and diversities are being accepted as a treasury rather challenge, and what is the ideological basis of Tesawwuf, it’s Islam”.

*How would you explain relatively weak affirmation of Sufism in Macedonian society?*

While answering the question considering the affirmation of Sufism in Macedonian society, one interviewee representing the Islamic society pointed out that Muslims have their religious life completely covered by Islamic society. Namely, Islamic community is completely dedicated on every religious aspect on which all Muslims are subjected. Nearly the same is the answer given by others interviewees representatives of Islamic society, although one interviewee gave interesting answer. This interviewee pointed out that in the last decades, the first moments of independence but also the time before it was a characteristically low level of improvement in various cultural aspects of this society in general. As a consequence of this situation of ignorance, in a case it's reflected as a marginalization of a number of elements that for ages ago have played constructive role for this society in general. A few interviewees representing the intellectual society explained how Macedonian society was supposed to recognize those cultural aspects in the early days and moments of creation the modern Macedonian state, because at the end what we see today is only a fraction of what needs to be seen as a whole considering the Macedonian society. Tracing the problem for this situation most of the answers have found a middle ground in people's interest. Meaning, in their nature Tariqas are closed for general public, they are like mini organizations which made their affirmation in a direct correlation with the way they perform their religious rituals etc. As a part of Islamic society in Macedonia, Tariqas are equally treated and preserved in their original form. When further questioned were the Islamic society undertakes some activities in Tariqa's cultural affirmation – the answer was negative. The representatives of Tariqas pointed out that the current situation of Macedonian society is crisis. One of Tariqa's representatives explained that Republic of Macedonia as a country and as society respectively is still under transition: process that just maybe hasn't affects the whole but some parts of the social life are surely deeply affected. All overall, whole society is under crisis. A lot of things that are with existential importance are not well represented in our society. Such case is the current situation with the Tariqas. Macedonian society doesn't have the slightest notion considering the Tariqas and Tesawwuf. These conclusions affects Christians as well as Muslims.

*Is the activity of Tariqas in Macedonian society to be considered latent and if so, what are the reasons for such latency?*

Considering the question 8, part of the representatives of Islamic society explained that there's a certain correlation among some of the rituals performed by Tariqas that are closed for general public, having in mind the Dervish orders that are not completely backed up by Islamic society but are tolerated.

Some of the representatives of the intellectual society argued how Tarikas are closed orders in general aspect, that has their place within Islamic society, and their actions are prescribed by certain strict rules and on which all followers are subjected. Also there are a variety of customs and rituals that are exclusively Sufi in nature and are strictly dedicated for members of Tariqas.

Tariqa representatives, a part of them answered that Tesawwuf and the Tariqas are not well represented and all the activities remain strictly within what is known as a few folklore gatherings. But this isn't just a thing to blame Tariqas but the whole society because Tariqa and Tesawwuf aren't only doctrinaire thing, but a cultural, phenomenological, educational, etc. So the values of Tariqa and Tesawwuf should be a thing of interest for all institutions that are dealing with this matter.

*Is the Tariqas subject for stereotypes within Macedonian society?*

Representatives from Islamic society answered that there are no such thing like stereotypes considering the Tariqa orders inside Macedonian society. More to say, Islamic society acts in a way not to provoke any sort of discrimination or prejudicial actions considering the Tariqas or wider membership.

Similar answers gave the representatives of the intellectual society where one interviewee explained how Tariqas are closed in their religious actions but that is how they act and not a result of some stereotypes or discriminatory policies conducted by Islamic society or someone else.

One of the representatives of the Tariqas explained how not knowing the Tesawwuf in general have a consequential stereotypical praxis.

*The Tariqas within Macedonian society, are they opened for just a certain group of citizens having certain ethnicity?*

Chattering about actual position of the Tariqas with the rest social elements in Macedonian society, representatives of the Islamic society clarified that Tariqas are in general opened towards all social factors and social elements. One of the interviewees pointed out that having in mind the nature of Tesawwuf, Tariqas are directed towards man, people in general, and this is not only an element of Tesawwuf but of Islam in general because the Holly Quran is the last divine word that was passed by the Prophet with a mission to teach people on mutual understanding.

Another interviewee explained the openness of the Islam towards world and minding that not only Tesawwuf, but Islam as a whole is in its core opened and inclusive religion.

Representative of the Tariqas will clarify that Sufism in its teachings opens the secrets in a front of the people thus attending to express that there is no such thing as invisible but only that what man is not in power to see by the way mentioning the Sufi parole centering the divine presence at every action of man, whether it's a mindful or physical action.

Representatives of the intellectual society have their answers pointed at the same conclusion that was expressed by the representatives of the Tariqas.

*How is Sufism represented inside Macedonian society?*

Searching to understand the position of Sufism inside Macedonian society has directed the survey to the point where most of the answers from the interviewees were concluding nearly the same idea. That idea was the sole basis of the Sufism, its intrinsic human dimension.

When describing the Sufism within Islam, interviewees representing the Islamic society explained how that is a bit similar with the Protestants within Christianity. Sufis emit their

wisdom directly towards human mutual understanding and respect. That is why Tesawwuf is a bit closer to the modern man, having modern considerations, a man that is not completely dedicated on the religious jurisprudence and yet is a man of faith. This expression has a similarity with the answers given by representatives of the intellectual society and they will add that modern man caught inside modern current will be much easier to approach the cultural works that penetrate the subject of Tesawwuf – like it is the example with Rumi Mevlana, compared with the distinctive principles of the Sharia law.

One of the representatives of the intellectual society argued how Tesawwuf is constructed by strict rules, and yet for the sake of modernity workings of the Sufi saints, the Sufi literature, writings, poems etc where wisdom and morality are the subject, are more accessible for contemporary people.

Representatives of the Tariqas pointed out how Sufism is on low level of presence in what is to be a public social life. And even at this low level of presence, it's with a lot of defects and misunderstandings of the essence. Namely, one of the interviewees explained that Macedonian man mostly have some notion about Sufism through the workings of Mevlana Rumi as most accessible, and some similar Sufi authors mainly from France, but all of this is pretty much below what Tesawwuf has potential for, having in mind here the positive examples with United States.

*Despite the enormous affirmation that Sufis achieved inside US and Europe,  
why Sufism is unknown within Macedonian society?*

Locating the reasons for such positioning of Sufism within Macedonian society, representatives from the Islamic society explained how the general membership of the Islamic society have their religious needs fully accommodated inside Islamic society of the Republic of Macedonia.

Sufism inside US is well supported thanks to recognition of a similar Protestant tradition that keeps the religious life as individual matter what means, further will explain the representative from Intellectual society, “people can perform their religion within the privacy of their home with their relatives, close friends, and what happens in public life is more reserve and settle approach regarding the subject of religiosity. That is one option that leads to individualization of religion experience, an experience that should be more individual then collective”.

Most of the representatives of the Tariqas had a similar explanation how Sufism represents the spiritual side of the faith and modern man that is overloaded with consumerism as a way of life there is a certain need for this spiritual enlightenment. That is the reason why Sufism is more analyzed by Western scholars. Situation with Macedonian society, sublimating the expressions one interviewee will continue, “sadly but Macedonian society just can't get off this constant transitional vortex and this is why we don't have time for much needed and valuable things in our lives”.

All interviewees were questioned about the attitude of the contemporary Macedonian society considering the Tariqas, and the representatives of the intellectual society commented that this society is in endless cycle of transition and these elements of Sufism just passes by like totally not perceived buy citizens. Another representative of the Islamic society pointed out that terminology Sufism – Islam is something equal and the same thing which is the same case with those who've heard a thing or two for Sufism.

*What is the general attitude of the contemporary Macedonian society  
regarding Tariqas with anticipation on low acquaintance with the subject  
of Sufism?*

Few of the representatives of the intellectual society explained how with this days modern world situation, following the Western societies quest for spirituality has entered in our neighborhood also. Similar with the Western societies, our society aims for a better life, for quality life and that's exactly the virtue of Tesawwuf. Having this attitude, spiritual awakening and investment in spiritual development, the intention is to increase the quality of life.

Pretty much interesting was the answer given by some of the interviewees pointing out that Sufism, closely examined is a little odd for average people but what was added by the representatives of the Tariqas is that older citizens mostly artisans, tradespeople recognize what Sufism have within its teaching as once authentic and rather unique trait of the oriental Islam religion. With this answer given by the representatives of Islamic society go along the answers of the representatives of the Tariqas. Namely, one of the interviewees of the Tariqas added how the older families that have grown in this authentic intercultural settlement of the twenty century or before have a notion about this aspect of Islam religion.

*Were there some obstacles considering the religious activities of the Sufi groups within Macedonian society and its cultural development?*

Representatives of the Islamic society agreed with their answers that there's no such thing as obstacles in religious activities of the Tariqas inside Macedonian society and its cultural development. One representative will explain how Islamic society doesn't argue with most inherent elements of Sufi tradition within Islam religion; they're given enough freedom with their praxis.

Representatives of the intellectual society explained how is needed some sort of activity plan mainly performed by the government authorities and public institutions so it could be supported the cultural elements of Sufi tradition that isn't something new in this area. The answers of the Tariqa's representatives are similar to this explanation. One of the interviewees of the Tariqas will add to this that obstacles were no reported but there is no such thing as a support.

*Should Tariqas act toward increasing their efforts in potential enhancement of cultural integrations?*

Representatives of the Islamic society explained how this society represents unrestricted support for all religious needs of its followers including the needs for certain affirmation etc. The only limit that is present is time and finances so Islamic society doesn't restrict if Tariqas do something on their affirmation within our society.

Part of the representatives of the intellectual society pointed out how there is a situation of different opinions within Tariqas in Macedonia. So this situation isn't something new for us because it was present also in near history. On the sub question to give a more strict explanation on this situation, one representative of the intellectual society will explain that there is a history of pondering in attitudes within Tariqas in Macedonia. Another interviewee from the intellectual society will explain this situation with long tradition of strict and heavy polarized political duality that reflects in social and cultural life for long time.

One of the interviewees representing the intellectual society will point out how Macedonian society should define its goal that will have a rather unification effect and this move is needed especially from the Tariqas that are a part of the society and it is natural to have a mutual interference between Tariqas and Macedonian society.

Similar observation was given by the representatives of the Tariqas, where one interviewee will explain pretty vividly that Tariqas should unite among themselves in a first place so they will represent Sufism as it should and then they should promote all cultural decorations of the Tesawwuf.

*Could some parts of the Sufism be a part of the Macedonian everyday life?*

Representatives from the Islamic society will explain that substantial part from the Islam religion is part from the everyday life in Macedonian society. Some of the interviewees explained how for years and decades before there were some praxis to minimize this centuries old tradition in interaction on Balkan peninsula but Western culture did teach us that what we are taking here isn't just Sufism or Islam or just Christianity – Orthodoxy but all that interaction between people having their own cultural traits at these areas is the true treasure and Sufism has the potential to be its authentic mark.

Representative from the intellectual society explained how elements of Sufism not only are substantial in Western societies but they are dealing with rising aspirations by common people. So this situation will get us because the message of Sufism, will point out the interviewee, “the very basis of the Sufism are the elementary human characteristics: Love, Respect, and Community”.

Similar expression was given by the representatives of the Tariqas, meaning that there are elements from Sufism that are part from everyday life but the potential of Sufism can offer more.

*Is Sufism capable in creating a religious and cultural balance within Macedonian society?*

Representative from the Islamic society will explain that Sufism and Islam in general are directed towards religious and cultural integration and for example there are various historical situations like the Prophet Isa that is present in Christianity and also in Islam. So the potential for cultural integration was preset and is still present but it is up to us how we will use it.

Representative from the intellectual society will explain that Sufism has big potential for cultural integration. Sufism is something similar to what Protestants are inside Christianity. Sufism has more relaxed approach for the followers and people in general speaking from cultural aspect, and from religious aspect there are certain rules that are as a necessary to be followed by the believers. But the thing that touches wide popular masses is the workings from the great Sufi teachers with the message that is sent to the all people for mutual and unconditioned love and respect among each other. Other representatives from the group share this view.

Representative from the Tariqas will explain: “Tesawwuf at the same time is a cultural consolidation of the whole society and with ages inside Tariqa circles are cultivated numerous elements of mutual art and culture. Yes, of course.”

Other representatives from the Tariqas gave similar answers.

*Do you think that Sufism could bring relief and integration considering the religious and cultural relations within Macedonian society, closely as it is the case with USA?*

Representatives from the Islamic society all agreed that Sufism as a part from the Islam has the potential to contribute in this manner.

A representative from the intellectual society described how world examples, namely USA have recognized that potential and that is the reason why they invest in that policy.

Some interviewees from the intellectual society gave similar answers with the representatives from the Islamic society and explained that Islam is a religion that aims for balanced relations in general among all people in every aspect of their social life.

Confirmed answer was also given by the representatives of the Tariqas, explaining how Sufi teaching can bring balance and mutual understanding in Macedonian society.

*Will it be useful if Macedonian society take some specific actions in better affirmation on Sufism, as for example that is the case with USA?*

Representatives from the Islamic society gave pretty reserved answers for this particular question which was in a way expected minding the previous answers where in more occasions on the scale were placed Sufism and Islam.

Some of the interviewees representing the Islamic society explained that in this way every man will be more useful for whole society. Namely Islam have a lot of cultural elements that bringing the message of mutual coexistence, personal and social affinities, also a simulative approach for constructive interpersonal relations. And speaking in this manner, Tesawwuf is part of the Islam and certainly its affirmation from cultural aspect, in rather refined aspect would be highly beneficial for this society.

Interviewee from the intellectual society will point out how USA entered the policy of glocalization with a few tactical moves among which Sufism stands as a very exceptional protagonist. He will add: "We are not seeking who is the brightest or smartest, it is only a situation of a circumstances where the practical mind has its lead in every aspect of what is known as a social sphere. What follows here is a transition from multiculturalism in to interculturalism and that is a process that has affected the whole region".

Similar is the answer from another interviewee representing the intellectual society who represented Sufism as extremely important moment whose integrative potential was recognized by Western societies.

Representatives from the Tariqas explained that such policy would be very fruitful for Macedonian society.

*What measurements would you recommend to the cultural subject that would have result in better affirmation of Sufism within Macedonian society?*

Most representatives from the intellectual society explained that most important that should be done at this very moment by the cultural institutions would be substantial efforts in preserving the Sufi objects, buildings that are in much deteriorated condition. Also, another representative will add that published cultural material from distinguished Sufi writers should be increased.

Interviewee representing the Tariqas explained: "In my opinion the state should take very seriously the phenomenon of religion and its social role. Then, of course that it should be done more efforts in further translations and publishing of the workings of distinguished Sufi writers as it is Mevlana Rumi; in this manner we could take the example with Western societies, presentation of cultural elements of Tesawwuf within society in general, etc." .

#### 4. Conclusion

Islam religion has its specific charm that was built in centuries during the Ottoman Empire, and it has its influence on Balkan Peninsula. As an Empire's religion, Sufism has its duty to affect all the various nationalities and religions that were then present in the region and to act as a peace promoter in the region. The potential of cultural integration is evident in every aspect of Sufism, beginning from its base premise which is divine love. This potential was detected by the US State Department on which was created US foreign policy in the wider region of the Middle East.

Macedonian society has a long history of wide multicultural relations. This is a social network built by vast variety of nations, nationalities, and religious varieties. Nevertheless, the late

history of the Macedonian society was the antireligious influence emitted by the previous communist regime that has its effect more or less in the mess that was evident in latter process of transition. As time progresses, people in their masses returned their religious beliefs as it was in the days before the communist regime. Thus, in these moments of religious renaissance, there were Islamic currents originating from Middle East that propagated the thought in a way that is a bit different from what was known among the older generation. Their accent was directed towards a fraction of what is Islam in its comprehensiveness. This fraction is known as *Al Islam* and it means the religious praxis. Thus, this is the second level of the fate and is occupied with the righteous way in practicing the religion directed to achieve complete awareness of the *murid*. This was such that every aspect of the religious life has a strictly prescribed way on how to be practiced. What is notable within Macedonian society, mostly within older generation, is in having a little different way of practicing the Islam religion. Islam praxis is not so evident. Yes, it is present but its awareness is on higher level. Communication with older generation Muslims is more directed on wise thoughts. It involves telling stories of great wisdom without pointing directly on mutual interreligious tolerance, but latently pointing on human coexistence. Hence, a member of the Tariqa will say, “it is the charm that Sufism gave in this region.”

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